

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application as amended respectfully is solicited on behalf of the Applicants.

With the instant response, seven (7) claims have been amended in order to materially advance the status of the present prosecution.

Each of the independent claims, namely claims 1, 21, 25, and 26 have been amended to recite that the fiber pellets are metal coated carbon fibers. Such feature originally was recited, essentially, in dependent claims 5 and 28.

Claim 25 has been rejected under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Mayama *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 4,530,779. Mayama, however, does not appear to disclose that substantially all of a plurality of fibers comprising electrically conductive metal coated carbon fibers are coated to form preimpregnated fibers. Rather, at col. 2, ll. 58-65 of Mayama it is mentioned that a titanate coupling agent is coated onto the surface of a fiber bundle, there being no teaching that the coating is capable of penetrating the bundle to coat substantially all of the individual fibers thereof. [See also col. 4, ll. 24-26, “One or more bundles 2a of a long fibrous conductive filler 2 are passed through a titanate coupling agent solution 11 for surface treatment.”; and col. 2, l. 66, bridging col. 3, l. 2, “As shown in Fig. 2, a titanate coupling layer 3 is formed on the outer surface of a bundle 2a of fibrous conductive filler strands and a synthetic resin layer 1 is formed therearound.”] Accordingly, claim 25 should be considered novel over Mayama.

Claims 1-3, 6-20, 25-26, and 29-35 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 98/06551, in view of Devanathan, U.S. Patent No. 4,978,360, or Mayama *et al.* As mentioned, each of the independent claims 1, 21, 25, and 26 have been amended to recite, as originally was essentially recited in dependent claims 5 and 28, that the fiber pellets are metal coated carbon fibers. As claims 5 and 28 were not rejected under this particular combination of references, claims 1-3, 6-20, 25-26, and 29-35 likewise should be considered to distinguish over this combination.

Claims 4-5, 21-24, and 27-28 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the preceding combination of references as applied to claim 1, and further in view of Kosuga *et al.*, U.S. Patent No. 4,960,642, or Soens, U.S. Patent No. 5,397,608.

Neither the primary WO reference, nor any of the secondary Soens, Devanathan, or Kosuga, references appear to disclose, as now claimed, the use of metal coated carbon fibers. Rather, and as noted by the Examiner, the primary WO reference mentions that non-glass materials having suitable reinforcing characteristics may be used. Mayama does mention at col. 2, ll. 33-39 that “glass or carbon [sic] fiber, coated with an electroconductive layer such as a metal layer” may be employed.

Accordingly, it might be proposed to use the metal-layer-coated carbon fiber of Mayama in the process of the primary WO reference. However, it is believed that the WO reference implicitly teaches against such a use. That is, it would appear that the use of a metal coating on the carbon

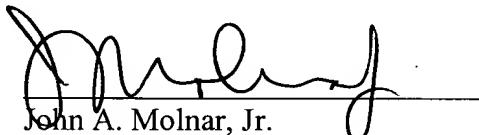
fiber, as might be taught by Mayama for EMI shielding or otherwise, would actually decrease the reinforcing properties of the fiber insofar as the interface between the metal coating and the carbon fiber would be a weak point in the composite which could lead to the failure thereof when subjected to shear or other loading. Thus, it is submitted that the claims as amended should be considered to properly distinguish over the cited references.

Claims 1-9, 11-20, and 26-35 have been rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mayama as applied to claim 25 above, and further in view of the WO reference. Applicants submit, however, that the Mayama and WO references would not be properly combinable in the manner proposed by the Examiner.

In this regard, and as mentioned, Mayama is directed to a process wherein a titanate coupling agent is coated onto the surface of a bundle of fibers, whereas the WO reference is directed to a process wherein a coating is made to coat substantially all of the fibers in the bundle. There thus appears no reason, save for a hindsight reconstruction of the claimed invention, why one of ordinary skill in the art would have been motivated to substitute the WO process for that of Mayama. Accordingly, it again is submitted that the claims as amended should be considered to properly distinguish over the cited references.

In view of the foregoing remarks, wherein the claim program as amended has been shown to clearly define the claimed invention as being patentable over art made of record, the issuance of a Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

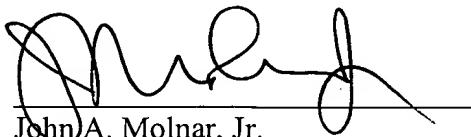
Respectfully submitted,



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